

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 306340

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, SHUM, PINT, KS, KN

SUBJECT: WEEKLY STATUS REPORT - KOREA

TO: EA - MR. HOLBROOKE

FROM: EA/K - DAVID BLAKEMORE, ACTING

1. NORTH KOREAN LEADERSHIP CHANGES STRESS PRAGMATISM
(CONF).

MANAGERS AND PRAGMATISTS WERE CHOSEN FOR PROMOTION
OR RETAINED IN OFFICE ON A NEW ROSTER OF GOVERNMENT
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OFFICIALS NAMED BY NORTH KOREA DECEMBER 15. REMOVED
FROM THEIR POSITIONS WERE FIGURES ASSOCIATED
WITH IDEOLOGICAL CAMPAIGNS IN SUPPORT OF KIM IL-SONG
AND POSSIBLY OF KIM'S EFFORTS TO GROOM HIS SON TO
SUCCEED HIM. FIRMLY IN POWER, KIM APPARENTLY HAS
DECIDED TO SHIFT PYONGYANG'S PRIORITIES FROM RESOLVING
INTERNAL LEADERSHIP QUESTIONS TO ATTACKING IMMEDIATE

PRACTICAL ISSUES.

NORTH KOREA'S NEW PREMIER, YI CHONG-OK AND SEVERAL OF THE OTHER PERSONS PROMOTED ARE ECONOMISTS AND MANAGERS, ASSOCIATED WITH PAST ECONOMIC POLICIES WHICH HAVE FAILED--NOTABLY, PYONGYANG'S QUEST IN THE EARLY 1970'S FOR FOREIGN TECHNOLOGY WHICH LED TO ITS CURRENT TRADE DEBTS. THEY APPARENTLY HAVE ESCAPED CENSURE BECAUSE THESE POLICIES WERE DETERMINED BY KIM IL-SONG HIMSELF.

THE ELEVATIONS OF YI, FOREIGN TRADE SPECIALIST KYE UNG-TAE, AND AGRICULTURIST KIM MAN-KUM SUGGEST THAT KIM IL-SONG HAS DECIDED TO CONCENTRATE HIS GOVERNMENT'S EFFORT TOWARD RESOLVING ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND TO SET ASIDE, AT LEAST FOR NOW, QUESTIONS OF IDEOLOGY AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP. TWO FIGURES RESPONSIBLE FOR BUILDING A PERSONALITY "CULT" AROUND KIM IL-SONG, AND POSSIBLY FOR PROMOTING KIM'S EFFORTS TO GROOM HIS 36-YEAR-OLD SON FOR SUCCESSION TO POWER, WERE REMOVED FROM OFFICE. THE SHIFTING OF PREMIER PAK SONG-CHOL TO A SINECURE AS VICE PRESIDENT FURTHER SUGGESTS THAT KIM WANTS TO HALT INTERNAL DEBATE AND POSTPONE ACTION ON POLITICAL SUCCESSION.

2. KIM TAE-CHUNG MOVED FROM PRISON TO HOSPITAL
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(CONF)

IN THE EARLY MORNING HOURS OF DECEMBER 19, THE ROKG

TRANSFERRED KIM TAE-CHUNG FROM HIS PRISON CELL IN CHINJU TO THE SEOUL NATIONAL UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL FOR TREATMENT OF RHEUMATISM, FROM WHICH HE HAS SUFFERED FOR MANY YEARS. THE ROKG MINISTRY OF JUSTICE ANNOUNCED THE MOVE, STRESSING THE POINT THAT KIM'S LEGAL STATUS HAS NOT CHANGED. REPORTERS WERE APPARENTLY ON HAND AT THE HOSPITAL WHEN KIM ARRIVED. WIRE SERVICES HAVE CARRIED STORIES ON THE MOVE, INCLUDING DESCRIPTIONS OF KIM'S HOUR-LONG REUNION WITH HIS FAMILY AT THE HOSPITAL, COMMENTS BY MRS. KIM AND LEADING POLITICIANS. WE DO NOT YET KNOW IF KIM WAS MOVED AS PART OF ROKG EFFORTS TO RELEASE ALL THE MYONGDONG PRISONERS BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR OR WHETHER THE MOVE WAS MADE PURELY OUT OF CONCERN FOR KIM'S HEALTH.

3. ROKG CABINET RESHUFFLE (LOU)

ON DECEMBER 20, PRESIDENT PARK RESHUFFLED HIS

CABINET, APPOINTING 8 MINISTERS, INCLUDING THE FIRST MINISTER OF ENERGY AND RESOURCES. HEADS OF MINISTERIES CHANGED WERE DEFENSE, EDUCATION, AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES, COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY, GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION, THE SECOND MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO, AND ADMINISTRATOR OF THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION. THE FORMER MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MOVED TO ENERGY AND RESOURCES AND THE FORMER MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE REMAINED IN THE CABINET AS COMMERCE MINISTER. NONE OF THE NEW MINISTERS ARE NEW TO GOVERNMENT, AND PRIME MINISTER CHOI, FINANCE MINISTER KIM, AND FOREIGN MINISTER KIM, WHO HAD BEEN RUMORED AS CANDIDATES FOR REPLACEMENT, REMAIN AT THEIR POSTS. VANCE

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